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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7663rd meeting
Thursday, 31 March 2016, 10.45 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Shen Bo
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	France	Mr. Lamek
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	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
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	Senegal	Mr. Seck
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	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae, Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission; Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan; Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Kate Gilmore, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Ms. Løj, who is joining the meeting today via video-teleconference from Juba.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Mogae.

Mr. Mogae: I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to again address the Security Council.

Following my last briefing to the Council on 19 February (see S/PV.7628), I must unfortunately report that the implementation of most aspects of the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan continues to be delayed. The key milestone for the initial element of the Agreement — the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity — has yet to be reached. Violations of the permanent ceasefire also continue, as most recently documented by the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, in the states of Upper Nile, Western Equatoria and Western Bahr el-Ghazal.

The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) has publicly released these violation reports so that the full details of the investigation are made known to the South Sudanese and to the broader international community. Notwithstanding the continuing trend, in recent days there has been notable progress, and the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity now seems within reach.

In response to the plan for transitional security arrangements for Juba, the capital, which I issued on 23 February in my capacity as Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, the first of the 1,370 troops of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Opposition have now returned, by a combination of United Nations and charter aircraft.

The role of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in the operation has been critical, not only in terms of making aircraft available, but also in providing crucial logistical support to this operation, both in Malakal and in Juba. Flights are planned to continue over the coming week, until the full complement of 1,370 has been transported. Following the arrival of these forces, the First Vice President-designate, representing the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in Opposition, has assured us that he will return to Juba, thus permitting the formation of the new government.

SPLM in Opposition representatives have confirmed that there are no further conditions or obstacles to the return of the First Vice President-designate, and therefore I am cautiously optimistic that the new Transitional Government will be in place by the middle of next month. While this is months behind schedule, it is a vital step forward in the implementation of the Agreement, which I welcome. That said, the parties can do more to prepare for the return of the First Vice President-designate to Juba and ensure that the formation of the new government is not itself destabilizing.

Although developments in recent days are positive, there is still much work to be done by the parties and by the international community in support of a more robust peace in South Sudan. As I observed in my statement to the Council in February, the act of forming the new Government will not automatically relieve the humanitarian, development, political, military and economic crises that the country continues to face. While both the present Government and the SPLA in Opposition have vowed to strengthen their cooperation with the humanitarian response, and the Government has formally announced that all military units have been ordered to cooperate with the humanitarian

response, the overall situation remains dire, with millions remaining at risk. In economic terms, South Sudan's economy is in desperate trouble and urgent measures are needed by both this Government and the next to address the situation and implement agreed reforms and procedures.

As I said to the representatives of JMEC at our most recent meeting in Juba, without action on economic reform and restructuring, the Agreement will be imperilled. I urge the parties to consider what steps can be to taken immediately to mitigate the situation, as well as what steps can be taken immediately following formation of the new transitional government.

The parties must also turn their attention to the resolution of the State's internal administrative boundaries. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) communiqué of 31 January, later endorsed by JMEC, outlines the formation of a new, ad-hoc national boundary commission to review the number of States and their boundaries. It is critical that this commission be quickly established to address the issue and prevent any further destabilization.

I wish to reiterate my firm belief that the South Sudanese parties should continually be encouraged by IGAD, by the African Union and by the Council to respect the commitments in the Agreement. Such commitment is even more vital as we reach the cusp of the formation of the new Government. There is little time to be lost if the next two and a half years — the transition period provided for in the Agreement — are to be meaningful and see genuine implementation of the Agreement's provisions.

I thank the Security Council for its continued attention to the situation in South Sudan and urge that, at this critical time, the Council continue to focus on the situation in South Sudan.

The President: I thank Mr. Mogae for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Løj.

Ms. Løj: I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to provide this brief update to the Security Council on the situation in South Sudan. As the next regular report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan will be available in the coming weeks and in light of the statements of the other speakers today, I will focus my comments on key operational developments, including the support of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

Despite the signing of the peace agreement, violence continues in many areas of the country. In Upper Nile, tensions between the Dinka and Shilluk communities remain high following the outbreak of violence that occurred in the United Nations protection site in Malakal in February. Since that incident, UNMISS has been supporting humanitarian partners to re-establish facilities and restore service delivery within the site, while also providing force protection for food distribution both within the site and to the internally displaced persons who relocated to Malakal town. We have also taken measures to increase perimeter security at the site and we continue to engage closely with community leaders and the local government to prevent any resurgence of violence.

I welcome the United Nations Headquarters-led Board of Inquiry that has been constituted to assess the response of the Mission to the incident in Malakal, and stand ready to provide any support the team may need to conclude its investigation. Its findings, combined with the recommendations of the Mission's own preliminary investigation, will strengthen our ability to prevent such conflict from occurring in the future.

Elsewhere in the country, clashes between Government forces and armed groups continued in the Equatorias and in the greater Bahr el-Ghazal region, with reports of civilian deaths, as well as looting and the harassment of communities by Government forces. Jonglei continues to see a resurgence of intercommunal clashes, both in the Greater Pibor Area, and more recently, between communities in Pochalla. Warrap and Unity have also seen civilians killed in a continued cycle of violent retaliatory cattle raids. These conflicts are not new; they erupt out of historic social divisions and competition over limited resources and will likely continue to threaten longer-term peace and stability. Furthermore, the dramatic deterioration of the economic situation is continuing to take a heavy toll on the people of South Sudan and could have security implications. As an additional consequence, humanitarian needs are escalating and spreading rapidly across the country.

This overall context only underscores the urgent need to sustain momentum towards implementing the peace agreement. As Chairman Mogae has just highlighted, some very important wheels have begun to turn, in no small part because of the continued

commitment of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) and partners. I wish to assure the members of the Council that the Mission is fully supporting this process under the coordination of the JMEC. Allow me to provide some examples of that support.

Over the past months, UNMISS has provided logistical and technical assistance to the Joint Military Ceasefire Commission in its efforts, including the clearing of land at some designated sites and the installation of sanitation facilities. The United Nations Mine Action Service has also worked to clear unexploded ordnance from the planned sites. Meanwhile, the Mission is supporting the Commission in the establishment of the joint Juba coordination centre, formerly known as the Joint Operation Centre.

UNMISS continues to provide air transport to move opposition forces to Juba, in line with the agreed transitional security arrangements. On 24 March, the Mission completed the first airlift of 22 high-ranking opposition officers from Pagak to Juba, including generals of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition, who will constitute the leadership of the joint integrated Police and Strategic Defence and Security Review Board. Airlifts resumed on Monday, 28 March, with the transport of an additional 39 opposition forces from Malakal to Juba, including their light weapons, followed by a third batch of 40 the next day. We shall continue these operations throughout the week, weather permitting, and today 130 additional soldiers have arrived — 40 on a United Nations flight and 90 on a Troika-chartered plane.

The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism continues its deployment across the country, with accommodation and other logistical support, including force protection, provided by UNMISS. The Mechanism has also taken on the additional task of verifying the redeployment sites for military forces outside Juba, in line with the transitional security arrangements. These are critical responsibilities, and we are providing the necessary support to the monitoring and verification teams on the ground to facilitate their investigations as much as possible.

South Sudan is at a critical juncture. While I am slightly optimistic that the developments that Chairperson Mogae and I have just highlighted are steps forward, we all know that enormous challenges and hurdles remain. In tandem with this measured progress, continued ceasefire violations and the rise of previously dormant intercommunal conflicts, coupled with difficulties in meeting the country's growing humanitarian needs, deplorable human rights abuses and the sharp economic downturn all threaten to derail the peace process. Sustained progress will require both parties to form the Transitional Government without further delay and to demonstrate the courage to compromise for the sake of peace. Most important, it will require South Sudan's leaders to begin to put the people first.

The formation of the Transitional Government is indeed a necessary step towards setting the country on a path to longer-term stability and improving the lives of the people, who have suffered far too much for far too long. But it is just a first step. The work does not end when Riek Machar returns to Juba to form the Transitional Government with President Salva Kiir. In fact, that is when the hard work of rebuilding the country has to start and difficult decisions must be taken. That is why we all need the continued support of the members of the Council and the sustained effort and cooperation of the United Nations, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and all partners. The road ahead will be long and difficult, but we must move ahead. The people of South Sudan deserve nothing less.

The President: I thank Ms. Løj for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in South Sudan. I thank the previous briefers — the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Løj — for their very clear remarks.

When I briefed the Council last month, I drew attention to the deepening humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. Some 6 million people — more than half of the population — are currently in need of humanitarian assistance. Of these, a staggering 2.8 million people are severely food insecure, over 2 million people have been forced to flee their homes, and more than half of all school-aged children are not attending class.

Despite the Council's presidential statement S/PRST/2016/1 of 17 March, calling on all parties to

protect civilians, allow people to move freely and to facilitate timely, full, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access, yet again I have to report that the situation remains dire. Civilians continue to be targeted, attacked and displaced, and acute humanitarian needs persist, exacerbated by recurrent access challenges. In addition to the unimaginable individual and community abuses that the people of South Sudan have sustained, I must also highlight the fact that, despite the call for a cessation of hostilities in the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, the geographic scope of the conflict has grown. In recent months, as we have just heard from Special Representative Løj, we have seen new outbreaks of violence in areas around Western Bahr el-Ghazal, Western Equatoria, Jonglei and Malakal. Such violence has resulted in the displacement of well over 150,000 people, with many forced to flee their homes repeatedly — some more than 10 times.

By way of example, on the same day that I briefed the Council last month, fighting erupted in Pibor and surrounding areas, resulting in the displacement of around 13,000 people. Further, some 8,000 internally displaced people seeking refuge in Mboro, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, were forced to flee that area again when fighting erupted on 21 March. A woman who had sought refuge in Mboro and then had to flee to Wau said, "We survived on leaves and turmeric; all our belongings, including food, were looted".

Let us not forget that nearly 200,000 people continue to seek protection inside United Nations protection of civilians sites, as they still do not feel that it is safe enough to return home. Regrettably, the sanctity of these sites has not been respected, and more than 25,000 people remain displaced as a result of the events in Malakal. Humanitarians and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan continue to work together to make the conditions in these sites as decent as possible. However, the sites will never be a replacement for the places that people call home.

Children remain particularly vulnerable to the expanding conflict. In recent months, children have been separated from their parents while trying to flee the fighting, including 84 documented cases following the events in Malakal. Moreover, schools and health facilities, which are inviolable under international humanitarian law, have been damaged or destroyed, denying children access to education and health care. These new conflict-afflicted areas are the same locations where people are most desperate for help. Displaced, food insecure and vulnerable, these are the populations we must be seeking to aid and protect. However, they cannot be reached by aid workers owing to a host of impediments that continue to hamper aid operations. In 2015, more than 900 access incidents were reported by humanitarian partners in South Sudan, representing a 14 per cent increase from the previous year and a 68 per cent increase from the year before that. This year the trend continues.

In the 14 days since the adoption of the presidential statement of 17 March, more than 17 incidents of obstruction of access for humanitarian activities have been reported, comprising interference by parties from individual armed actors through to national authorities. The true number is likely to be far higher, given that some humanitarian partners are reluctant to report every incident out of fear of retribution or harassment. For example, last week in Unity, local authorities demanded free transport to Juba aboard the contracted plane of an international non-governmental organization (NGO). When the pilots refused, citing their duty to uphold humanitarian principles, a truck loaded with armed men arrived at the airstrip and threatened to detain the pilots if they did not oblige. Such action compromises the ability of humanitarians to safely and effectively deliver humanitarian assistance and is simply unacceptable.

In Malakal, after the horrific violence in mid-February, humanitarians were denied river access to Wau Shilluk for over one month, disrupting the delivery of life-saving assistance to more than 27,000 people. In a location where homes and businesses had been looted or destroyed, leaving only minimal resources, the denial of access presents a genuine threat to lives. Access was finally granted when the remaining water and nutrition supplies were days away from exhaustion and schools had already closed, as supplies had run out. The lifting of restrictions came only after interventions from the humanitarian community, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, and visits by several ambassadors from various countries to Malakal to speak with the Governor.

Delays in the delivery of assistance cost lives and expend precious resources. What humanitarians need is timely, unimpeded access to those we assess to be in vital need, not ad hoc, case-by-case considerations after much attention, pressure and persuasion.

The challenge in South Sudan represents an increasing disconnect between the assurances at the national level and the actions of local groups. All too often, even when official assurances are received at the national level, they are not respected by local actors. Illegal exactions and taxes remain rampant, and humanitarian convoys are consistently subjected to demands for payment at checkpoints. Despite the Government's statement that humanitarians should not pay at such points, authorities at the local level have conveyed a very different message, noting that humanitarians should "expect" to make such payments. Convoys travelling from Juba to Bentiu by road recently reported more than 50 checkpoints, with each truck required to pay a total of more than 30,000 South Sudanese pounds, or about US $1,000, in exactions. Such extortions are unacceptable and must stop.

The United Nations Department of Safety and Security has also been denied access to conduct security risk assessments in areas where fighting has taken place. Since January 2016, security risk assessment missions have been denied six times in Central Equatoria alone. These risk assessments are a critical first step to assessing, preparing and enabling effective humanitarian action.

In addition to the expanding geographic scope of the conflict, new drivers of crises are emerging and vulnerabilities are being exacerbated, resulting in additional humanitarian and protection needs. Most notably, the deteriorating economic situation is driving instability. As a result of the economic crisis, the monthly cost of food and clean water for an average family now amounts to more than 10 times the salary of a teacher. Such pressures are felt most acutely in urban and population centres. In the north-western areas of Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Warrap, heightened food insecurity, compounded by an economic downturn and growing unrest, has resulted in the flight of some 38,000 people into East and South Darfur since the end of January.

On average, more than half of the access incidents reported involve violence against humanitarian personnel or their assets. When I briefed the Council last month, I reported that 47 humanitarian staff had been killed since December 2013. I am appalled to report that this number has now risen to 49. The most recent case is that of Mr. Yien Malouth, an integrated community caseworker for Save the Children, a husband and the father of two children, who was tragically shot in Akobo, Jonglei. Greater action must be taken to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers.

Since the beginning of 2016, there have been at least four major instances of the destruction or looting of humanitarian supplies and facilities. These have taken place in Malakal, Pibor and Western Equatoria. Vital goods such as nutritional supplements, educational materials and water-treatment supplies have been burned or deliberately destroyed. A conservative estimate places the value of humanitarian losses since the beginning of 2016 at around $10 million, including more than $5 million in damages to the Malakal protection-of-civilians site.

Much more important than the monetary losses is the loss of human life that results from these wanton attacks against humanitarian facilities and assets. Each time a facility or a compound is damaged or destroyed, and each time supplies are looted, vulnerable civilians are denied vital assistance.

Despite the challenges, humanitarian partners continue to stand in solidarity with the people of South Sudan. In 2015, and despite the access challenges presented to them, partners were able to reach more than 4.5 million people with assistance, often in the most remote areas. In the first two months of 2016 alone, partners reached more than 1 million people. Humanitarians continue to find innovative ways to save lives, even in areas where formal access is not granted. For example, partners reached more than 100,000 people with life-saving assistance in Unity last year amid violent conflict and access denials.

However, despite the courageous efforts of our colleagues on the front lines and the intensive work of humanitarian partners to scale up their capacity, a critical lack of funding continues to severely hobble the humanitarian effort today. Of the required $1.3 billion earmarked to reach more than 5 million people, only 9 per cent — yes, only 9 per cent — of the funding has been received from the international community. Amid a food and nutrition security crisis, NGO partners are scaling down nutrition and health programmes because they simply have not received the funding needed to operate. The small window of opportunity afforded by the dry season will close in the coming weeks, and the funding received has allowed humanitarians to pre-position only 35 per cent of the required supplies across the country. As a result, more supplies will have

to be moved by air during the rainy season, increasing the cost of delivery by up to six times.

The Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights will speak in greater detail to the human rights violations and grave protection concerns in South Sudan, but what is clear from the humanitarian perspective is that both parties have failed to abide by their obligation to protect civilians and civilian facilities and simultaneously failed to allow full, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to those in critical need.

The terms of the peace agreement have clearly not been enough to halt the rapidly escalating and worsening situation and its implications for millions of civilians across the country. We need action. To this end, I ask the Council to call on the parties to the conflict and all armed actors operating in South Sudan to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law to protect civilians, allow free and unhindered humanitarian access and to protect humanitarian workers and their assets.

Let my message to the Council today be unequivocal. Since my last report, since the Peace Agreement, the hideous facts on the ground are that the humanitarian situation has severely worsened in that short time and continues to worsen, and the only measure I am using is the lives, the suffering and the deaths of the millions of innocent women, girls, boys and men caught up in the horrendous fight between two sides that have no care for the people they claim to represent. In that light, I call upon Security Council members to stand in solidarity with the people of South Sudan and to advocate within their areas of influence to seek an end to the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Gilmore.

Ms. Gilmore: On behalf of the High Commissioner, I thank the Council for this opportunity to brief it on the findings of the assessment mission to improve human rights, accountability, reconciliation and capacity in South Sudan.

In short, the findings are that despite the August 2015 Peace Agreement, human rights violations and abuses against the civilian population continue unabated. Since December 2013, all parties to the conflict have committed gross human rights violations and abuses, along with serious violations of international humanitarian law, including the killing of civilians, widespread sexual violence against women and girls, the pillaging and destruction of civilian property, including homes, humanitarian infrastructure, schools, medical facilities and even hospitals. Both the Government and the opposition have forcibly conscripted children, some as young as nine years of age, in violation of international human rights law, international criminal law and international humanitarian law.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army and allied militia systematically perpetrated rapes and other acts of violence against women, during its military offensive in Unity state. Rape, in particular, was used as a strategy to terrorize and punish civilians. From April to September last year, the United Nations recorded more than 1,300 reports of rape in Unity state alone. The High Commissioner, like the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan, finds that there are reasonable grounds to believe that allegations of gross violations, including those committed in 2015, may constitute war crimes and/or crimes against humanity.

The High Commissioner's report also finds a new and alarming spread of violence and insecurity to areas previously less affected by the conflict. In Western Equatoria, for example, the Government's intensively militarized response to insecurity has been met with resistance from an increasing number of armed defence groups, but it is civilians who are caught in the middle. Furthermore, space for the exercise of freedom of expression, including dissent, has narrowed considerably, with human rights defenders, journalists and other civil society actors subjected to intimidation, harassment, attack and detention without due process. That curtails democratic space, violates the State's international human rights obligations and, without any doubt, further undermines prospects for sustainable peace.

A legacy of violence and revenge underscores South Sudan's urgent need for accountability for both past and present-day human rights violations and abuses, as well as violations of international humanitarian law. Yet despite the repeated public and formal commitments given by the parties to the conflict to ending the violence and punishing the perpetrators, no evidence has been found of any genuine effort on the part of either the Government or the opposition to live up to those undertakings. If South Sudan, as a country, and its people, as rights-holders, are to realize sustainable peace, security and development, the long-standing and vicious cycle of impunity must

be broken. The perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law and of other international crimes must be held to account. South Sudan must address the underlying problems and root causes, including historical grievances, that led not only to the current conflict, but undermine prospects for its enduring resolution.

The Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, notably its provisions on accountability and transitional justice, provides useful elements in that regard. Chapter V, for example, provides for the creation of a commission for truth, reconciliation and healing, a hybrid court for South Sudan, and a compensation and reparation authority. However, to date, as we have just heard, the Transitional Government of National Unity has not been put into place, and those other mechanisms are therefore not established, even though the African Union has taken some steps towards discussing the establishment of the hybrid court.

Transitional justice mechanisms should be established in line with international norms and standards. There must be genuine consultations based on the informed participation of victims, civil society actors, including women's groups, and all other relevant stakeholders. There must be needs assessments to inform efforts aimed at truth, reparations, reconciliation and ensuring non-recurrence. If such consultations are to be comprehensive, meaningful and inclusive, they must be conducted over a significantly longer period than the minimum one month stipulated in the Agreement. Above all, the necessary preconditions for the establishment of those transitional justice mechanisms — a complete cessation of hostilities, improved security, commensurate resources and a high level of political commitment — must all be met.

At its recently concluded thirty-first session, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution establishing a Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan. Its mandate is to monitor and report on the situation of human rights and provide guidance on transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing. The Human Rights Council also mandated the new Commission to make recommendations on technical assistance to the Transitional Government to support transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing. However, the mandate is predicated on the Transitional Government being fully operational, fully committed to ending the violence against the civilian population and fully cooperative with the hybrid court for South Sudan.

The formation of the accountability and transitional justice mechanisms for South Sudan will not be without their challenges, but they are essential. The High Commissioner calls on the African Union to swiftly establish the hybrid court, with a designated unit in support of witnesses and victims, including children and those subjected to sexual violence. However, he notes with concern that the court will try only the most senior officials responsible for human rights violations and abuses. Many more perpetrators need to face the justice that is so critical to lasting peace. That responsibility will fall to South Sudan's courts, which currently do not have the capacity to conduct such trials. Failure to address the deeply ingrained disregard for human life will only lead to further violations.

The only lasting and viable solution to the terror and pain perpetrated against the people of South Sudan is to dismantle the apparatus of violence, hold to account those who have imposed such egregious suffering and put an end to the cycle of impunity. Hostilities must cease promptly and conclusively, and the international community must do what is needed to support the Transitional Government of National Unity, once formed, so that these transitional justice mechanisms can be instigated to function fully and effectively throughout their necessary life span. Enduring peace in South Sudan and justice for its people requires that these steps be taken immediately and with urgency.

The President: I thank Ms. Gilmore for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malok (South Sudan): I am pleased and honoured to address the Security Council under your presidency, Sir. Permit me to begin by congratulating you and your delegation on assuming that responsibility for the month of March and for the manner in which you have managed the presidency of the Security Council this month. I would like to assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in your endeavours for the few remaining hours of your presidency.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian

Affairs; Ms. Kate Gilmore, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights; and Mr. Festus Mogae, Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), for their briefings, which have provided more depth with regard to the issues raised during this meeting.

First and foremost, I would like to reiterate to the Security Council the commitment of my Government to the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Thus far, we have implemented what has been required of the parties by the Agreement. The Government of South Sudan is grateful for and appreciative of the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the international community, including members of the Troika, and the European Union (EU), for enabling the parties to sign the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan in August 2015.

The implementation of the peace process is progressing well despite the delays in the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity. Nevertheless, the arrival in Juba of 22 Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A in Opposition) senior police officers, 39 and 40 commissioned and non-commissioned officers, respectively, as well as the 15 bodyguards of Mr. Riek Machar — we have received a total number of 130 troops in Juba — is a step in the right direction.

My Government has committed to transporting the SPLA in Opposition forces from Kaldak to Malakal, while some of the forces are in Bentiu and Pagak. The forces in Pagak will be airlifted from Gambella in Ethiopia. We acknowledge and appreciate the assistance of UNMISS, the Troika and the EU in airlifting them to Juba. As agreed by the parties and JMEC, by the end of this week, if everything remains as planned and UNMISS, the Troika and the EU continue to airlift the SPLM/A in Opposition from the aforementioned locations, the entire 1,370 agreed forces will be in Juba, paving the way for Mr. Riek Machar's eventual arrival there. Thereafter, the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity will be completed.

As far as the humanitarian situation in the country is concerned, as I stated before the Council in my statement last month (S/PV.7628), the humanitarian situation in my country has not been exclusively caused by conflict, as the humanitarians would want the world to believe. As we focus on the conflict-related humanitarian situation, we should not forget the dire situation caused by climate change, in particular long drought and heavy rains, which more often than not have a devastating effect on the population.

The 1996 World Food Summit described a state of food security as existing when all constituents within a nation State, at all periods of time, have both physical as well as economic access to nurturing food in a sufficient quantity. Dietary needs must be met and preferences should support a healthy and active lifestyle. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, the four critical pillars of food security have been identified as the availability of food, access to the population, utilization and, finally, stability. The principal consideration for South Sudan as a new country is the fact that the right to food is inherent within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is vitally important in order to enjoy other rights. Similarly, while the 1996 World Food Summit established that food insecurity should not be employed as a tool for political or economic pressure, the reality is less clear.

It is the hope of the Government of South Sudan that with the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the Non-Governmental Organization Act, governance and the humanitarian situation will improve and allow the displaced persons both in camps for internally displaced persons and points of contact to return home. The Government of South Sudan regrets the incident reports by the humanitarian agencies and the loss of the lives of some humanitarian workers. It is not the wish of the Government of South Sudan to continue to fall into the abyss. It is certainly in our interest to promote stability and national healing. Considering the reports on the ground, the Government of South Sudan commits to providing as much assistance as it can to the community of humanitarian workers in order to help facilitate their work, as they aid our people with vital services. It is our hope that there will be a decrease in these regrettable incidents and that normalcy, an unknown phenomenon in South Sudan, will begin to become a reality.

I would like to conclude by saying that my Government has officially responded to the recent Human Rights Council report on my country. My delegation also acknowledges the decision of the Human Rights Council, at its last cycle, to establish a three-person Commission to report annually to it. My country is also preparing its first universal periodic

review report, to be delivered in October. Nevertheless, my Government does not accept the allegation of organized and systemic killing, torture and rape attributed to the Government's soldiers and its allied militia. I would like to quote here from the response of my Government:

> "It is acknowledged that the SPLA, the SPLA-IO and other criminals use the same uniform. Unless the culprits are physically apprehended, it is impossible to determine whether it is the Government's soldiers and its allied militia, the SPLA-IO or other armed criminals who committed the crime."

That quote is consistent with a previous report of the Secretary-General, which stated that the SPLA uniform is widely available.

The President: Before inviting Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject, as this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of March, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of Angola to the members of the Council, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives, their respective staff and to the Secretariat of the Council for all the support they have given to us.

Indeed it has been a busy month, and one in which we rallied to consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone and without the hard work, support and positive contributions of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat, as well as all relevant conference service officers. As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of China good luck in the month of April.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.